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Great Russia RFi

CHAPTER 4

Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (Russia)

Capital, Moscow (Moskva); area, 6,501,500, population, 111,000,000

SU 131 GR 131 THE RUSSIAN SFSR is the largest, most populous, and economically the most important union republic of the USSR, extending over nearly four fifths of the total area and including more than one half the total population of the Soviet Union. Its frontiers coincide with those of the USSR in the north and east, along the seas of the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific. Only in the southwest and west do the other union republics intervene between the territory of the Russian SFSR and the international border of the USSR. Since the acquisition of the northern half of East Prussia, the Russian SFSR extends over the vast distance of nearly 7,000 miles, from the area of Kaliningrad (20° E) to the tip of the Chukchi Peninsula (170° W). From north to south, the maximum extent varies from 1,500 miles in the east to 2,500 miles in the west.

SU 133* GR 133 The Russian SFSR has essentially a lowland relief, consisting of the East European plain and, beyond the Urals, of the West Siberian lowland and bordered by mountain systems in the east (Central Siberian plateau and peripheral ranges) and in the southeast (Altay and Sayan mountains). In the southwest, the Russian SFSR extends to the crest of the Greater Caucasus. The principal rivers of the USSR flow through this republic: the Volga and the Don rivers in the south of the European part, the Onega, Northern Dvina, and Pechora rivers in the north, and in Siberia the Ob' (with its chief affluent, the Irtysh), the Yenisey, the Lena, the Yana, the Indigirka, and the Kolyma rivers; all these streams flow north into the seas of the Arctic Ocean. Only the Amur River has an easterly course, emptying into the Sea of Okhotsk of the Pacific Ocean.

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Su 131 137 GR 131 137

The Russian SFSR includes the entire polar belt of the USSR, with the Arctic islands of Franz-Josef Land, Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya (North Land), the New Siberian and Vrangel' (Wrangel) islands, and so forth. Along the shores of the Arctic seas lies the tundra zone, which was settled by the Russians more than 700 years ago in its western (European) section, but only in recent years in its eastern (Asiatic) section. The taiga, in the south, occupies the major portion of the territory of the republic. Consisting largely of evergreens, the forest belt also has deciduous-tree zones, particularly in the European part. Farther south lies the black-earth belt, at first covered with a wooded steppe vegetation, but gradually changing into the steppe proper. The extreme south is a dry steppe, in which chestnut soils predominate; these are, however, only slightly inferior to the black earth with respect to fertility. Subtropical vegetation occurs only on the southern shore of the Crimea and along the Black Sea littoral of the Caucasus.

Su 135 GR 135

Because of its extensive coal and petroleum resources, the Russian SFSR is best supplied with power-producing minerals. Two of the largest coal basins of the world lie within the confines of the Asiatic portion of the republic: the Kuznetsk Basin, along the upper Tom' River, between the Salair Ridge and the Kuznetsk Ala-Tau, and the Tunguska Basin (as yet unexploited), along the lower Yenisey River, largely north of the Lower Tunguska, its right affluent. Lesser basins in Siberia are near Minusinsk and Cheremkhovo and along the Bureya River, while the Moscow and Vorkuta basins are most important in the European part. The Russian SFSR also includes the eastern section of the Donets Basin, the major portion of which lies within the Ukrainian SSR. An important petroleum zone extends throughout the European part of the Russian SFSR, beginning on the Arctic Circle in the Pechora River basin, along the western slopes of the Urals, past Molotov and Ufa, widening westward to the middle Volga in the area of Kuybyshev and Syzran', passing through the Gur'yev-Emba area of the Kazakh SSR, and reappearing north of the Greater Caucasus range at Makhachkala, Groznyy, and Maykop. In the very center of the European section of the Russian SFSR lies about one-half of the world's reserves of iron ore. Here more than 200 billion tons of low-grade ore lie buried in the Central Russian upland, east and southeast of Kursk, in the so-called Kursk magnetic anomaly. Other iron deposits occur in the Kola Peninsula, near Kerch' in the Crimea, in the Urals, and in Siberia.

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CHAPTER 25

Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic

Capital, Minsk; area, 80,100, population, 7,220,000

THE BELORUSSIAN SSR is situated in the western section of the European USSR and is bordered by Poland in the west, the Ukraine in the south, and the Baltic republics in the north. It forms part of the East European plain and is separated by the Lithuanian-Belorussian upland into a small northern and a larger southern lowland.

GENERAL SURVEY

THE NORTHERN SECTION, in the vicinity of Polotsk, is an old moraine region drained by the Western Dvina. The upland, which extends in a broad chain of hills southwest-northeast across the republic, forms the main watershed between the Baltic and the Black Sea drainage areas. Of low average elevation and rising to more than 1,100 feet, it consists of a series of glacial end moraines and isolated groups of hills. The intervening depressions are the sites of river valleys (Western Dvina, Neman, upper Berezina, and their affluents) or are filled with sand and other quaternary deposits left by the retreating continental glaciers. Here and there appear remains of the primeval forest, of which the Belovezha Pushcha, on the Polish border, is the most important example. The entire region is a characteristic moraine land form, with lakes bounded by high rounded banks, remains of moraines blocking the original course of rivers, and by an abundance of pebbles and boulders throughout the fields. In the south, the relief gradually changes into a marshy depression along the Pripet River and its affluents. This is the Belorussian Poles'ye, also known as the Pripet Marshes, a swampy,